DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 365 912 CG 025 176

TITLE	NASW Standards for Social Work Personnel Practices.
INSTITUTION	National Association of Social Workers, Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	Jun 90
NOTE	16p.; For related pamphlets, see CG 025 173-178.
AVAILABLE FROM	NASW Distribution Center, P.O. Box 431, Annapolis JCT, MD 20701 (single copy, free).
PUB TYPE	Legal/Legislative/Regulatory Materials (090)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Dismissal (Personnel); *Personnel Management; *Personnel Policy; Personnel Selection; *Professional Associations; *Social Work; Social Workers; *Standards
IDENTIFIERS	National Association of Social Workers

ABSTRACT

This document presents the standards for social work personnel practices established by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW). A discussion of general principles notes that the standards presented in this document are based on the principles that effective social service depends on qualified staff and that staff members can give their best service when they work under conditions of employment that are conducive to the maintenance of high quality and quantity of performance. The standards presented represent principles of sound personnel policies and practices and are intended to serve as a guide in the development of personnel policies by social agencies and other institutions employing social workers, such as health agencies, schools, and courts. A total of 16 standards are presented and interpreted. The standards deal with agency personnel selection and hiring procedures, grievance procedures, salaries, volunteers, staff development, personnel records, benefit programs, and termination procedures. The document concludes with a summary of major principles from the NASW's Code of Ethics. (NB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 365 912

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

NASW standards for social work personnel practices

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

CG 025 116

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

Bylaws of the National Association of Social Workers

Code of Ethics

Standards for the Classification of Social Work Practice

Standards for Continuing Professional Education

Standards for Social Work Personnel Practices

Standards and Guidelines for Social Work Case Management for the Functionally Impaired

Standards for the Practice of Clinical Social Work

Standards for Social Work in Health Care Settings

Standards for Social Work Practice in Child Protection

Standards for Social Work Services in Long-Term Care Facilities

Standards for Social Work Services in Schools

A single copy of the standards is available free of charge. Standards also may be ordered in bulk for a fee. Contact

Publication Sales
National Association of Social Workers
750 First Street, NE, Suite 700
Washington, DC 20002-4241
1-800-638-8799 or 1-202-408-8600

NASW standards for social work personnel practices

Approved by the NASW Board of Directors
June 1990

Introduction

An important function of any professional association is to issue standards that have as their essential purpose improving the services given by members of that profession. Because most social workers are employed in some type of agency setting (public, private, for-profit, or nonprofit), the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) is concerned with both the responsibilities of professional social workers and the environment in which they work.

The environment in which the professional works is crucial to the provision of services to clients, and it is important for this environment to reflect the ethical values that the profession embodies. Otherwise, it is possible for agencies to create a climate that impedes the social worker's ability to practice professionally and ethically.

NASW's Standards for Social Work Personnel Practices was first published in 1968 and revised in 1971 and again in 1975. This 1990 revision reflects a changing employment climate in which almost all agencies and businesses that employ social workers now have in place their own personnel policies. Before the 1980s, many agencies did not have written personnel policies and many did not operate under good administrative practices. As we enter the 1990s, the absence of written guidelines is the exception.

As a result, this revision of the NASW Standards includes less detailed language than did previous editions. NASW has reshaped the personnel standards to reflect the current workplace environment and to augment other standards.

Mark G. Battle, ACSW
Executive Director
National Association of Social Workers

General Principles

These standards are based on the principles that effective social service depends on qualified staff and that staff members can give their best service when they work under conditions of employment that are conducive to the maintenance of high quality and quantity of performance. Because the provision of responsible services to individuals, groups, and communities is the paramount concern of the social work profession, these standards are issued with the understanding that they will always be applied within the framework of this fundamental concern of the profession.

For social workers to function at their best, every organization employing them should have policies pertaining to personnel administration developed by a cooperative process involving staff, board, and administration. These policies should be available to all members of the staff and governing boards. As standards of good practice, they apply equally to administrative personnel and, except when indicated, to professional and nonprofessional staff.

An agency's personnel policies should include a clear, practical plan for affirmative action to achieve a work force that is free of racial or sexual discrimination. They also should allow for the nondiscriminatory administration of personnel matters.

Staff should participate in the development of personnel policies and in regular periodic review of them. The policies should include provision for hearing staff members' grievances and other provisions substantially similar to those that follow. These policies are endorsed by NASW and recommended by the association to practicing social workers, to employing agencies, and to the supporting public as being basic to good personnel administration and good social work practice.

These standards represent principles of sound personnel policies and practices. They are not intended to substitute for specific personnel policies formulated by individual agencies. However, they have been formulated to serve as a guide in the development of personnel policies by social agencies and other institutions employing social workers, such as health agencies, schools, and courts. When NASW has occasion to review personnel practices in specific organizations, these standards serve as a basis for recommendations to improve them.

As part of the NASW program for improving personnel policies, procedures have been established under which the association considers complaints filed by social workers against employers alleging violations of written personnel practices.[1] When complaints are filed against an employer who does not

have written personnel policies, these standards are used in the process of adjudicating the complaint.

STANDARD 1. The agency shall respect and uphold the social worker's right and responsibility to adhere to the profession's stated standards and the NASW Code of Ethics.

Interpretation

The agency's policies and regulations should be consistent with the profession's practice standards and should provide a climate in which the social worker can practice according to the principles of sound professional conduct and responsibility as represented by the NASW Code of Ethics. Nothing in the agency's policies should jeopardize the social worker's ability to practice according to the profession's ethical standards and those of the state regulatory agency.

STANDARD 2. The agency shall have a positive, systematic program to ensure that there are no discriminatory practices.

Interpretation

Most employers are governed by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended by the Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972 and other state and federal laws in prohibiting discrimination in employment. Every employer should have a written affirmative action plan. Conformance to the policy should be measured on a regular basis, and all management personnel should be responsible for helping to attain the affirmative action goals and objectives.

Comprehensive guidelines and suggestions for the preparation of affirmative action plans are available from the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

STANDARD 3. The agency shall ensure that there is no discrimination either in hiring practices or personnel actions because of characteristics of race, color, religion, national or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, age, gender, physical handicap, or political beliefs.

Interpretation

When preference is given to the selection of an employee or potential employee because of the requirements of the position, these factors should be appropriately identified and justified in writing and made known to all interested parties.

[1] NASW Procedures for the Adjudication of Grievances, revised September 1988.

As well as ensuring nondiscrimination in the workplace, employers should recognize the rights of employees as private citizens to engage in social or political activities without any repercussions in the workplace.

STANDARD 4. The agency shall maintain and make available a written personnel manual.

Interpretation

Personnel policies and procedures should be an integral part of the agency and should be developed and reviewed periodically by the governing body. The manual should state the philosophy and guidelines that the agency will use to relate to staff. The agency should ensure that personnel policies and practices are consistent with current federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines. Personnel policies should be maintained in written form and given to each employee at the time of employment. Personnel policies should clearly define hours of work, employment status, staff development, compensation administration, staffing systems, employee benefits and grievance/disciplinary/termination procedures.

NASW reaffirms that social workers as employees should participate in the formulation of personnel policies and procedures. NASW also reaffirms that employees should be protected in their right to organize and to bargain collectively concerning wages and working conditions. Professional values should guide the manner in which social workers, whether management or members of a bargaining unit, participate in any collective bargaining. The participation in a strike or other work action by a social worker does not, in itself, constitute a violation of the NASW Code of Ethics.

STANDARD 5. All personnel shall be selected based on specifically stated and appropriate qualifications for the position.

Interpretation

Job descriptions for each vacancy should state the requirements of the position, the salary range, the qualifications and experience required, and any other relevant information. Employees internally should be made aware of job openings, and, insofar as possible, positions should be filled by the promotion of internal qualified candidates. All appointments to a position should be declared in writing, with all conditions of employment clearly stated.

The agency should ensure that an appropriate classification system is in place and that positions requiring social work education and experience are filled by those with this specific educational background.

A job evaluation system should be used to determine the worth of positions in relation to other positions in the agency. NASW has prepared standards for both preprofessionals and professional social work staff that are available to be used as a basic classification format.

STANDARD 6. The agency shall provide a written grievance procedure for all employees.

Interpretation

There are two types of grievances: (1) those instituted by an employee for such things as an alleged denial of entitlement and (2) those instituted by the employer for such things as disciplinary or other adverse action.

The grievance procedures should be defined clearly and should embody the principles of due process including the right to a fair hearing and the right to appeal. The allegation should be described specifically, in writing, with a provision for the employee to have representation, if desired, by a staff member, or a union representative if applicable. The provisions for appealing grievance decisions and the person or persons having authority for final decisions should be delineated clearly.

STANDARD 7. The agency shall offer competitive salaries that attract and retain competent, qualified professional staff.

Interpretation

Policies and practices related to the administration of pay should be written and made available to all employees. The plan should include a salary range for each class of position as well as the amount, frequency, and basis of increments. Pay should be administered in compliance with all pertinent legal requirements.

The salary plan should include provisions for promotions when a social worker's duties and responsibilities are changed. Temporary reclassification and pay increase should be provided for regular employees who are assigned duties at a higher level than those they usually carry or who are required to carry an additional workload because of the prolonged absence of another staff member.

STANDARD 8. The agency shall reimburse social workers for expenses incurred in connection with authorized agency business.

Interpretation

Policies governing reimbursement of expenses should include attendance at luncheons and conferences, actual travel costs (mileage rates should be at least consistent with regula-

tions of the Internal Revenue Service), and any other out-of-pocket expenses while on agency business.

STANDARD 9. Agency personnel policies shall not prohibit a social worker from engaging in secondary employment.

Interpretation

Agency policies should reflect the rights of employees to engage in secondary employment provided that it does not interfere with their responsibilities to their primary employment. Social workers must be circumspect in avoiding any conflict of interest. Clinical social workers should adhere to the NASW Standards for the Practice of Clinical Social Work. (For policy regarding client options upon a social worker's termination of employment, see NASW Standards for the Practice of Clinical Social Work.)

When the primary employer's facilities and/or resources are used, there should be a prior written agreement which should include any reimbursement for such use.

When paid secondary employment such as teaching or speaking engagements takes place during regular working hours, the employee should seek prior approval from the employer. Agency policy governing these situations should include a provision for reimbursement to the agency for the time the social worker is actually absent. Reimbursement may take the form of requiring the employee to use earned annual leave (other than sick leave) or of allowing the employee to make up the time not worked.

STANDARD 10. The agency shall have a written policy governing the use of volunteers.

Interpretation

Volunteers should be used primarily to enrich, extend, or otherwise supplement the services of agency staff for the benefit of clients. They should not be used to replace staff positions. The policy should delineate clearly the functions and activities appropriate for volunteers with provisions for reimbursement of expenses and procedures for orienting, training, and monitoring the activities of volunteers.

STANDARD 11. The agency shall establish programs to develop the skills and abilities of employees.

Interpretation

Sound agency practice includes appropriate orientation for new staff members and for those moving into new positions in the agency, as well as opportunities for continued professional growth.

Continued professional social work growth requires that social work supervision be available for those social workers in direct practice.

Regular staff meetings should be planned for discussion of the agency's program and social work problems and methods. These meetings should supplement a structured staff development program with qualified training staff.

The agency should have available professional literature and also disseminate information regarding professional development activities in the community as well as in the nation.

The agency should make provisions for staff to attend conferences, institutes, workshops, or classes to advance the social worker's skill related to the services provided by the employer. Wherever feasible, agency time should be made available for educational purposes so that social workers may continue to upgrade credentials and further develop professional skills. Terms of such leave time should be set forth clearly in writing.

(See also NASW Standards for Continuing Professional Education.)

STANDARD 12. The agency shall encourage social work staff to participate in professional activities.

Interpretation

Involvement with a professional association is an integral part of the social worker's professional commitment. Therefore, agencies should encourage staff to participate in a range of professional activities. When that activity coincides with the agency's specific goals, the agency should allow the social worker time off for such participation, when this does not jeopardize the daily functioning of the agency. The agency should encourage staff to submit papers for presentation at local, state, and national conferences or lead workshops or institutes. Time off for professional activities under these circumstances should not result in the loss of vacation, salary, or compensatory time.

STANDARD 13. The agency shall have written standards of performance for all positions in its classification plan.

Interpretation

The written standards of performance should describe the quality and quantity of performance expected for each position. Evaluations should involve the joint participation of social worker and supervisor. The time of the evaluation should be planned in advance and should take place on a regular, at least annual, basis. The evaluation should be

presented in writing and should cover the points discussed in the evaluation conference. The employee should have the opportunity to read and sign the evaluation and to file a statement covering any points of disagreement. The final authority, however, belongs to the supervisor.

STANDARD 14. The agency shall maintain a current personnel record for each employee.

Interpretation

The agency should include in each employee's personnel record such information as original application, letter of appointment, copies of any references, contracts or agreements, description of work assignments, performance ratings and evaluations, and pertinent correspondence. The personnel record should be kept confidential and should be available only to authorized management staff and the employee.

STANDARD 15. The agency shall develop an administrative benefit program for all employees.

Interpretation

All benefit programs should be developed in accordance with applicable legal requirements. There should be no discrimination in administering benefit programs. The agency should include provisions for health, including coverage for outpatient and inpatient mental health services, with reimbursement for clinical social work services, life, long-term disability (LTD), and retirement insurance benefits. Copies of the group master contracts and agreements pertaining to employee benefit plans should be on file in the agency office and a summary description of each benefit plan and eligibility requirements should be provided to employees.

The agency should recognize the family responsibilities of caregivers and should include provision of job-protected family leave for the birth of a child, adoption, or illness of an immediate family member. To promote family stability while retaining a cohesive work force, the agency should provide flextime and should explore other approaches, such as job sharing, that recognize caregiving responsibilities.

STANDARD 16. The agency shall have written policies regarding termination of employment.

Interpretation

The agency should define such issues as probation, suspension, demotion, dismissal, resignation, layoffs, and severance pay. A formula should be established to govern the order in which employees will be laid off and rehired when

a position is abolished because of reorganization or retrenchment. Adequate notice of these changes should be defined. Both employer and employee have obligations, rights, and responsibilities with regard to employment termination that should be defined clearly in writing.

Code of Ethics

SUMMARY OF MAJOR PRINCIPLES

I. The Social Worker's Conduct and Comportment as a Social Worker

A. *Propriety.* The social worker should maintain high standards of personal conduct in the capacity or identity as social worker.

B. *Competence and Professional Development.* The social worker should strive to become and remain proficient in professional practice and the performance of professional functions.

C. *Service.* The social worker should regard as primary the service obligation of the social work profession.

D. *Integrity.* The social worker should act in accordance with the highest standards of professional integrity.

E. *Scholarship and Research.* The social worker engaged in study and research should be guided by the conventions of scholarly inquiry.

II. The Social Worker's Ethical Responsibility to Clients

F. *Primacy of Clients' Interests.* The social worker's primary responsibility is to clients.

G. *Rights and Prerogatives of Clients.* The social worker should make every effort to foster maximum self-determination on the part of clients.

H. *Confidentiality and Privacy.* The social worker should respect the privacy of clients and hold in confidence all information obtained in the course of professional service.

I. *Fees.* When setting fees, the social worker should ensure that they are fair, reasonable, considerate, and commensurate with the service performed and with due regard for the clients' ability to pay.

III. The Social Worker's Ethical Responsibility to Colleagues

J. *Respect, Fairness, and Courtesy.* The social worker should treat colleagues with respect, courtesy, fairness, and good faith.

K. *Dealing with Colleagues' Clients.* The social worker has the responsibility to relate to the clients of colleagues with full professional consideration.

IV. The Social Worker's Ethical Responsibility to Employers and Employing Organizations

L. *Commitments to Employing Organizations.* The social worker should adhere to commitments made to the employing organizations.

V. The Social Worker's Ethical Responsibility to the Social Work Profession

M. *Maintaining the Integrity of the Profession.* The social worker should uphold and advance the values, ethics, knowledge, and mission of the profession.

N. *Community Service.* The social worker should assist the profession in making social services available to the general public.

O. *Development of Knowledge.* The social worker should take responsibility for identifying, developing, and fully utilizing knowledge for professional practice.

VI. The Social Worker's Ethical Responsibility to Society

P. *Promoting the General Welfare.* The social worker should promote the general welfare of society.

This summary is of the NASW Code of Ethics, effective July 1, 1980, as adopted by the 1979 NASW Delegate Assembly and revised by the 1990 Delegate Assembly. The complete text, including the preamble and expanded definitions of principles, is available on request.

About NASW

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) is the largest organization of professional social workers in the world. As of January 1992, over 136,000 members participated in 55 chapters throughout the United States, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and the international community.

The association works to enhance the professional growth and development of its members, to create and maintain professional standards, and to advance sound social policies. NASW provides a variety of membership benefits including credentials (Academy of Certified Social Workers, Academy of Certified Baccalaureate Social Workers, the Qualified Clinical Social Worker, and the School Social Work Specialist) and insurance (professional liability, health, and life). The NASW Press, which produces *Social Work* and the *NASW News* as membership benefits as well as three other journals and several books each year, is a major service in professional development. In January 1991, the association released a major proposal for National Health Care, a single-payer system.

For more information on NASW membership or programs, write NASW, 750 First Street, NE, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20002-4241 (telephone: 1-800-638-8799 or 1-202-408-8600).